

Four of his sons were brought to the United States through the Pedro Pan airlift operation, only days before the Bay of Pigs invasion. Two more brothers remained in Cuba with their mother, Maria. Fernando also remained in Cuba where he led covert operations along with the CIA. He later managed to escape where he eventually reunited his family, and settled in Miami. It was there that MCM was founded and thrived, earning a reputation for managing the construction of some of the most complex and challenging projects in South Florida.

The commitment and hard work of MCM's personnel has resulted in it being named one of the fastest growing Hispanic Construction Firms in Florida. Not only that, they are the 7th largest Hispanic contractor in the United States as ranked by Hispanic Business Magazine (2012), as well as being ranked among the top 400 contractors in the United States by ENR magazine. They have also been awarded numerous accolades including the Florida Transportation Builders Association (FTBA) Design-Build Project of the Year for 2010, the Hispanic Company of the Year 2008 by the South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the Regional Contractor of the Year 2008 by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Having known the Munilla family for years, I can attest to their high degree of integrity, character and professionalism. They have also become very close friends of mine and are truly one of the most exceptional, loyal, trustworthy, and caring friends I have. It is a privilege to know all six of the Munilla brothers and their families. In addition, they have been devoted to their company, their employees, and the Miami community since its inception in 1983. Today, the Munilla family's dedication has made MCM an irreplaceable company for South Florida, and their family has become a treasure for the community.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to congratulate Munilla Construction Management, and the entire Munilla family, as they celebrate this milestone. I am certain that we can all look forward to many more years of outstanding service, and I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing their outstanding achievement.

VELTON LOCKLEAR III

HON. BETO O'ROURKE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 5, 2013

Mr. O'ROURKE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the memory of Army Sgt. Velton Locklear III, who died while serving his nation in Iraq.

Sergeant Locklear, known as "Lock" by his friends, was an El Pasoan, and graduate of Eastwood High School. During high school, he excelled at football and was an All-Star wide receiver.

Sergeant Locklear, like so many of his family members, wanted to serve in the Armed Forces. His two sisters, Julie and Lori, served in the Army and his father is retired Sgt. Maj. Velton Locklear Jr., who served in the Army for over 24 years.

After going to college at North Texas University, Velton decided to serve his country by joining the Army. During his career, he served

two tours of duty in Iraq. He volunteered for his first tour of duty and began his deployment in February of 2004. Soldiers who served with him, described Locklear as a gentle giant, who made the day better with words of encouragement during hard times and witty humor in good times. Another soldier said Sergeant Locklear was like a breath of fresh air; always positive, always had a smile on his face. His first tour ended in March 2005.

The second time Locklear deployed to Iraq was with the 25th Infantry, 3rd Brigade 2-27th Infantry Battalion in August of 2005. On Sept. 23 Mr. Locklear died in Riyadh, Iraq due to injuries suffered when an improvised explosive device detonated near his Humvee during combat.

Mr. Locklear was a committed and loving husband to his wife Denise and their two sons, Velton IV and Nathan, who reside in El Paso. He served our country courageously and with honor. Sergeant Locklear's service and dedication is an example to others and I am proud to honor him as a hero who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the United States.

RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE AND THE TPP

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 5, 2013

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the gentleman from Wisconsin (Rep. MARK POCAN) for organizing last night's Special Order Hour on raising the minimum wage and the negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

I very much welcome this opportunity to talk about trade issues, the minimum wage, and the growing wage gap in our country because they are closely related, in different ways, to one of the most urgent social, economic and political challenges of our time. I'm talking about the problem of growing inequality in the United States.

Over the past three decades, income inequality in the United States has been steadily on the rise. In fact, just before the 2008 financial crisis, the U.S. reached levels of inequality not seen since the late 1920s.

Today, the United States has the highest level of inequality of any advanced industrial nation. According to an analysis by the AFL-CIO, the average CEO at 327 available companies in the S&P 500 index is paid 354 times the average worker.

Moreover, a recent study showed that in 2010, the top 1 percent of U.S. families captured as much as 93 percent of the Nation's income growth gained during the economic recovery. So, this means that the most unequal advanced industrial economy in the world is becoming more so.

It is time to have an open debate and discussion on the wage gap in our country. This is important from a moral standpoint, as a matter of equity and fairness. But it is also important from an economic and political standpoint. That is, excessive inequality not only undermines social and political cohesion, it has also been shown to have negative effects on growth.

Recent research at the IMF has shown that excessive inequality slows growth because de-

pressed earnings lead to weaker demand and lower consumption.

Now, I understand that in a capitalist system, some degree of inequality is necessary for the function of a market economy, since it creates incentives to work hard and take risks. Left entirely to its own, however, the market system will produce more inequality than is economically necessary. And here in America, we have much more inequality than is necessary for efficiency.

This is also a political problem. We now have an increasing degree of resistance on the part of a lot of Americans to efforts to enter into new trade agreements because they are viewed as elevating the interests of capital over all other considerations.

Last month, I joined with 150 of my congressional colleagues in a letter to the President to express our serious concerns about the ongoing negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). We urged the President to engage in broader and deeper consultations with Members of Congress about what will be included in this broad-ranging international trade agreement. In addition to tariff issues, this agreement could include provisions related to labor, food, natural resources, the environment, patent and copyright law, health care, energy, telecommunications and financial services. As the Ranking Member of the House Financial Services Committee, it is particularly important to me that my committee be consulted about any provisions affecting financial services.

Past trade negotiations have resulted in NAFTA, the creation of the World Trade Organization, and Free Trade Agreements with Central American countries, Peru, Panama, Colombia, and South Korea. All of these agreements were promoted by large corporations, which claimed they would create jobs. But these were empty promises, and many of these same large corporations have continued to ship jobs overseas.

What American workers need is good jobs with good pay. That is why we need to make this discussion of the wage gap and the minimum wage a top priority.

The Federal minimum wage has been stuck at \$7.25 per hour for the past four years. The value of the minimum wage has not kept up with the cost of living, and record-breaking corporate profits have not trickled down to working people.

The real value of the minimum wage is at a historic low. Today, 40 percent of American workers actually make less than the minimum wage was worth back in 1968. That is almost one quarter of American workers. Too many American families who depend upon the minimum wage are seeking Food Stamps and Section 8 housing assistance and are constant visitors to our food banks.

The American people understand the importance of fair wages, and many States and local communities have taken matters into their own hands. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 19 States and the District of Columbia already have a minimum wage that is higher than the Federal minimum wage.

The National Conference of State Legislatures also reports that in 2013, the legislatures in California, Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island all passed bills to increase the minimum wage beginning in 2014. The legislature in California increased the minimum wage